

ENGAGING MARGARET

Developing a Program of Participation to Incorporate
Living Streets in the Margaret Street Corridor



A Proposal for the City of North Saint Paul

SGSR ASSOCIATES

<http://www.phillipsmarler.com.au>

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SGSR ASSOCIATES
MINNEAPOLIS - SAINT PAUL

December 2, 2013

Office of Community Development
City of North St. Paul
City Hall
2400 Margaret St. North
North St. Paul, MN 55109

Dear Mr. Ammerman,

North St. Paul is a vibrant community and one that plays a vital role in the greater Twin Cities metropolitan area. What began as a small industrial village has turned into a first-ring suburb and shares with neighboring St. Paul an active, intelligent, and progressive population. Because of these characteristics, and the community's desire to make it's city great, a plan for a redesign of several street corridors throughout the city was proposed in 2011.

Despite a Living Streets proposal that was built on a solid foundation, the plan ultimately failed. However, this same foundation remains, and the team at SGSR Associates believe the failures of the 2011 document was not in the plan itself, but rather in the lack of engagement made with this active, intelligent, and progressive community.

The following document presents a framework for ways in which the City might educate, communicate, and collaborate with the local population, in a way that will yield a publically supported and feasible Living Streets plan.

We appreciate your consideration of our services on this project and look forward to working with the City of North St. Paul.

Sincerely,

SGSR Associates

Principals: BrieAnna Jean Simon, Emily Ann Goellner, James McGee Shoemaker, Michael Emerson Richardson



Barr Engineering

Prepared by:

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THE SITE

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

North St. Paul is a first ring suburb of St. Paul, MN and part of the greater Twin Cities metropolitan area. Margaret Street North, a 1.6-mile long corridor, which bisects the 3.1 square mile city, is one of the most highly trafficked in the city, with an Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) of 3,163 across the entire length of the corridor.

Two distinct neighborhoods along Margaret Street are separated by a bustling main street and commercial district as well as Minnesota State Highway 36. The corridor connects residents to a number of schools and churches, and is capped on either end by a city park and a nature preserve.

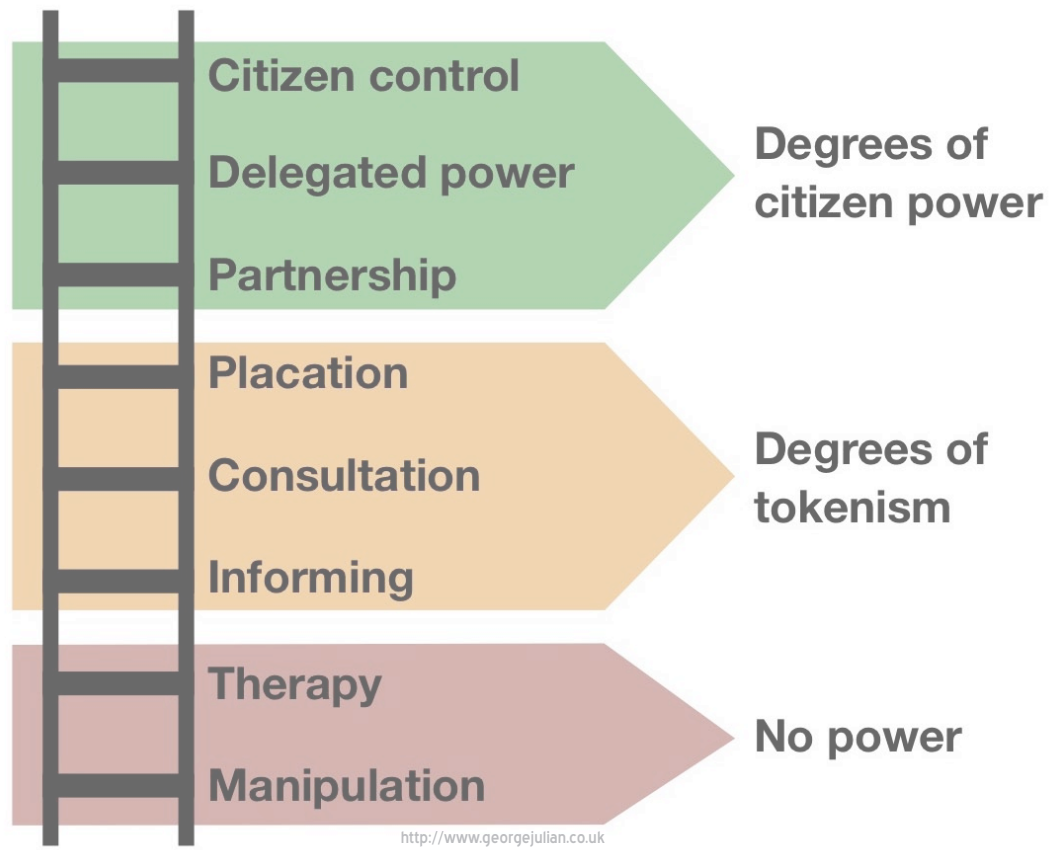


Figure 1 - Arnstein (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation

The public engagement process is an essential component to the implementation of the Living Streets Plan along the Margaret Street corridor. We have constructed an engagement process that places high value on meaningful collaboration between City staff and members of the North St. Paul community. Our approach aims to utilize the creativity of the community members of North St. Paul by asking them to assist in designing the new Margaret Street corridor.

Our approach is based largely on Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (Figure 1). Each rung of the ladder corresponds to the extent in which citizens have power in the decision making process. The top three rungs of the ladder, Citizen Control, Delegated Power, and Partnership, are the types of planning and participation processes in which traditionally marginalized citizens have obtained a great deal of decision making power. The engagement process we are proposing calls for a great deal of collaboration, or partnership, between the community members and city staff. The Public Participation and Living Streets Design and Implementation Process in the Living Streets Plan, found in Figure 1 of the Appendix, is lacking collaboration with community members during the design process. We aim to collaborate with community members during the preliminary design phase of the Margaret Street redesign project.

KEY ISSUES

Our proposal addresses our commitment to diversity, creativity, collaboration, and communication in this engagement process.

Engaging Diverse Participants

It is essential that this engagement process utilizes the creativity, talent, perspectives, experiences, and expertise of a wide cross-section of the North St. Paul community. We intend to reach out to as many people as possible and we intend to focus our efforts on traditionally marginalized groups of people. Demographic data from the 2010 U.S. Census illustrating the racial, age, and income diversity of both census tracts along the Margaret Street corridor are shown in Figure 2.

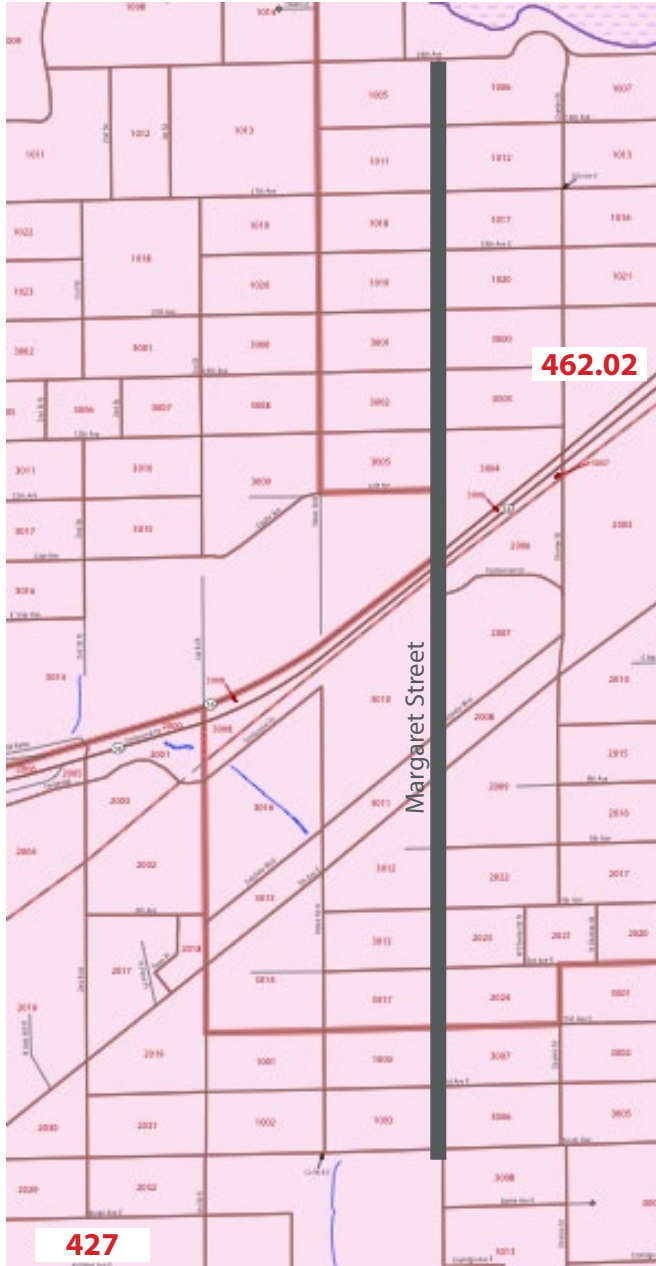
Where applicable, it is important to meet the needs of non-english speaking populations. North St. Paul, along with many Twin Cities communities, has substantial populations of Hmong and Vietnamese speaking populations. At meetings, it is important to ensure that communication between Staff and these residents is effective. Staff should consider having a translator on hand at any public meeting. Furthermore, outreach materials should be printed in multiple languages in order to accommodate these residents.

Race (percent of total tract population)					
Census Tract	White Only	African American	American Indian	Asian	Other/2+ Races
426.02	90.6	1.7	1.0	4.0	3.0
427	95.0	0.0	0.0	4.7	0.3

Poverty		
Census tract	Number below pov level	% Below pov income level
426.02	141	6.7
427	394	7.4

Income	
Census Tract	Median HH Income (\$)
426.02	60,903
427	46,571

Figure 2 - Race and Income Data for the Margaret Street Corridor (2010 US Census)



KEY ISSUES

As shown by the age demographic data in Figure 3, young adult populations--especially in the northern portion of town--are present in smaller numbers. This cohort is a crucial one to engage, as attracting and involving the millennial generation is the goal of many urban areas. To do this, extra efforts must be made to seek out their participation. Perhaps investigation into where these individuals frequent will help target engagement.

Utilizing Creativity within the Community

The typical engagement process does not utilize the creativity of its community members. We intend to do that by hosting a variety of events that enable community members to design Margaret Street according to the Living Streets Design Guidelines.

Encouraging Collaboration

Many engagement processes do not make attempts to approach community members, which contributes to low participation rates. We want to get out into the community and truly collaborate with the community members. We also intend to collaborate by consistently asking for feedback on our engagement process.

Ensuring Adequate, Clear, and Culturally Competent Communication

The technical aspects of the street design add a unique challenge to our communication efforts. Our communication style will be professional, fair, honest, appropriate, and culturally sensitive. We aim to understand the needs of our community members so that we can shape our communication efforts to those needs.

Age Structure								
Tract	Under 17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	64+	Total
426.02	389	140	269	250	377	255	414	2,094
Percent of total	18.6	6.7	12.8	11.9	18.0	12.2	19.8	100.0
427	1,162	691	591	690	860	618	585	5,197
Percent of total	22.4	13.3	11.4	13.3	16.5	11.9	11.3	100.0

Figure 3 - Age Data for the Margaret Street Corridor (2010 US Census)

GOALS & INTENT

We have devised a sequence of strategies that will generate public support for the implementation of the Living Streets Plan along the Margaret Street corridor. This community engagement process will serve as an example process for future corridors as well. In order to better understand and address the concerns of North St. Paul residents, it is essential to engage their perspectives in meaningful ways. We want to draw on their expertise and interest in Margaret Street.

We have identified several goals within the engagement process of the Living Streets implementation for the Margaret Street corridor.

Goal 1: Build a Base of Community Support to Achieve a Functional, Aesthetic, and Balanced Urban Street Pattern for Active Living

To facilitate the implementation of the Living Streets Plan along the Margaret Corridor, we aim to engage community members by using a variety of strategies in a multiple-staged process. We will build a base of community support for the Margaret Street redesign through collaboration with community members. We intend to build support not only for the Margaret Street corridor, but for all corridors identified in the Living Streets Plan.

Goal 2: Use Innovative and Creative Strategies to Engage a Diverse Group of Residents in the new Margaret Street design.

The North St. Paul Community is rich with creative minds from a variety of backgrounds, cultures, and lifestyles. In our engagement process, we intend to utilize these strengths to design a new Margaret Street. Instead of hiring professional technicians to design Margaret Street, which is the usual process, we will utilize the community members' creativity and expertise by asking them to assist in designing Margaret Street.

Goal 3: Properly Communicate Technical Information in Meaningful Ways

It is unique to ask community members to design a street. Streets are often designed by technical professionals because of their training in the technical aspects of the street layout. We intend to communicate those technical aspects to community members with clarity, honesty, fairness, and cultural sensitivity. We aim to make the information meaningful so that it can inform their design ideas to the greatest extent possible.

Goal 4: Maintain Multiple Lines of Communication Among All Parties Involved

Effective communication among parties is essential to a successful outcome for redesign and reconstruction of Margaret Street. Effective communication is not just a series of press releases and public hearings, but rather a series of personal conversations, meetings, unique events, and other opportunities for relationship building. We aim to facilitate communication among parties through such efforts.

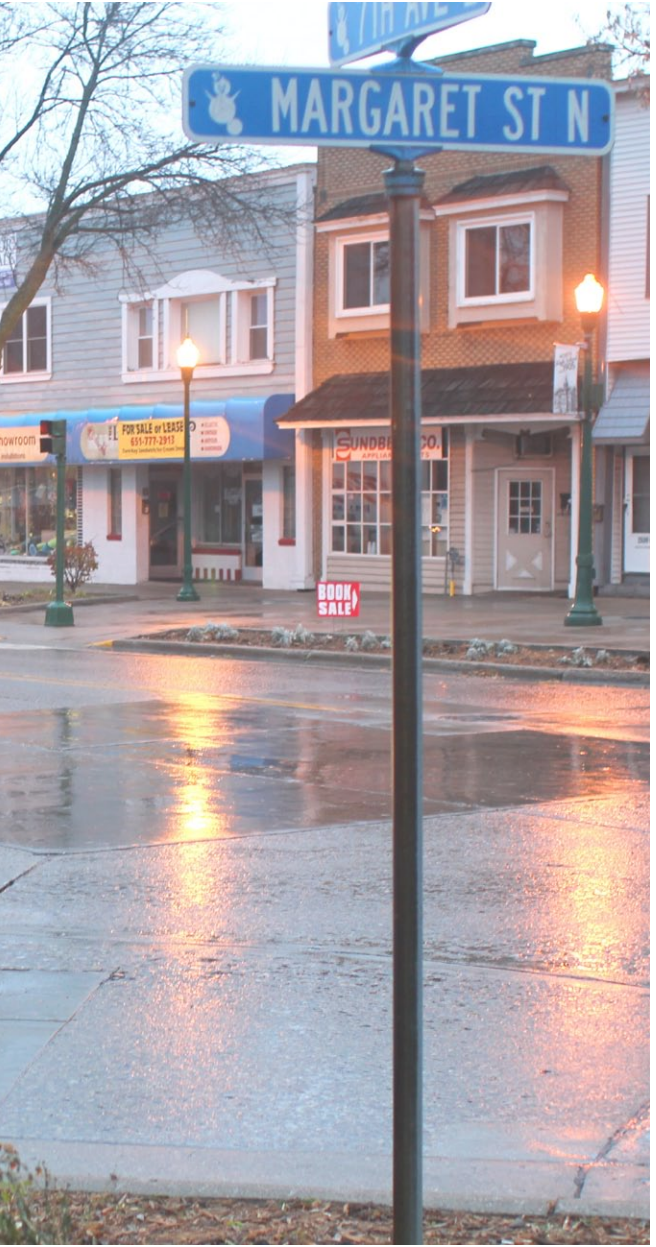
Goal 5: Document and Monitor the Outcomes of this Process to Improve the Process and Inform Future Efforts

We have identified ways to remain transparent in our documentation and monitoring of the process. We feel that it is important to continuously evaluate this process and search for ways to improve it. Our documentation and evaluation can help to improve the process for future corridor reconstruction projects.

Goal 6: Pursue Ongoing Engagement Efforts

Collaboration with community members is the cornerstone of our proposal. Through this process, we aim to facilitate the growth of new personal relationships between community members. We hope that these relationships carry on after Margaret Street has been redesigned. We hope that the collaboration in this process fosters the opportunities for future engagement efforts.

GOALS AND INTENT



James McGee Shoemaker

COLLABORATION

Throughout the process of community engagement, it is important to collaborate with other, and potentially unrelated programming in North St. Paul. In this way, Living Streets may take advantage of a number of residents located in one spot for a separate meeting. Communication among Living Streets staff and other city staff may yield brief presentation time slots at meetings or events already scheduled to be held within the city.

It is important to partner with events that will likely have attendees from a variety of interests and perspectives. Where at first it may seem only important to partner with meetings with topics related to Living Streets’ goals, it is equally or more important to reach those meetings and attendees with little knowledge or stake in Living Streets. In this way, those who otherwise might not be interested or informed of the goals or process of Living Streets may be reached.

- A glance at the December 2013 city calendar shows many opportunities for meeting collaboration:
- December 5 at 6:00 pm: Neighborhood Stability Task Force, City Hall
 - December 10 at 4:00 pm: Economic Development Authority Meeting, City Hall
 - December 12 at 7:00 pm:Valley Branch Watershed District Meeting, Lake Elmo City Council Chambers

It is essential that communication be made between Living Streets staff and organizers of other city planning efforts throughout this process.

- It is vital that meetings be fun and interesting. The idea of attending a meeting after a long day of work is not the most attractive proposition. A small investment in the meeting can generate big returns on participation. Examples of small investments include:
- Offer kids activities that could be related to Living Streets initiatives
 - Offer dinner to allow families to skip dinner in place of the meeting
 - Do not lecture the entire meeting. Present material, then activity. Alternate these sessions.



COMMUNICATION

Communication among staff and citizens is the cornerstone of our efforts. The following suggestions will increase the level of communication and information sharing designed to yield the best outcome for the project.

Project Website
A website first available at the beginning of the project is necessary for communication of upcoming events, overall scope and project information, project staff contact information, and any web-based design tools (to be discussed later). The website is a great tool for getting anonymous feedback as well as for providing clear communication to community members. There will also be a survey that users can take to give feedback on the events they have attended as well as their opinions on the project itself. There will be an open comment forum on the city’s website in which concerned community members can voice concerns. City staff should take time to address these concerns directly in the online forum.

Project Facebook and Twitter Page
A Facebook and Twitter page that is consistently monitored is a key resource which community members will access for up-to-date information. Comments can be responded to quickly and easily.

Corridor Outreach
It is important for community leaders and planners to go to the Margaret Street corridor to interact with other stakeholders rather than relying on the public to come to the planners.

Importance of Face-to-Face Interaction
As the plan progresses and the corridor takes form as a Living Street, it is important for planners to continue to seek feedback from stakeholders in face to face interactions as well. It is important because we want to ensure that previous concerns were met and future concerns will be addressed.

Promotional Activities

In addition to general communication, the promotion and branding will be essential to this project’s success. Some events might include:

- newspaper postings
- sidewalk chalk art that illustrates and describes the goals of the Living Streets Plan
- TV news stories
- Living Streets kickoff event
- Tying ribbons along trees of proposed corridors
- Pop-up or temporary bicycle infrastructure along proposed corridors
- Planting of a demonstrative rain garden
- Comparing the *nominal* cost of this project to the cost of other public projects (local sports stadiums)

Communicating Technical Information in a Meaningful Way

Communicating technical information about the Living Streets Plan and design is a challenge that our team can overcome. We recommend several strategies to ensure clear communication that enables community members to participate in our engagement process in a meaningful way.

Delivering technical information to our audience successfully is very valuable to this engagement process. We want the community members, our audience, to be involved with the design of Margaret Street using the design guidelines articulated in the Living Streets Plan. If our community design team is not knowledgeable of the technical aspects of the design, their design may be more difficult to implement or it may not meet the expectations set forth in the adopted Living Street Plan.

Whether in an oral presentation, in conversation, or in a written document, it is essential that one knows the audience. It has an incredible impact on the appropriate communication style. Often times, this is most relevant when communicating technical data. Staff should avoid the use of jargon. For example, ROW is a common acronym for right-of-way, but not every community member has this knowledge. Definitions or a glossary should be available on the website or in print at meetings to avoid confusion. Speaking clearly and concisely will assist in comprehension of all concepts, but especially those that are technical.

In addition, the use of graphics is an effective tool for communicating technical elements. Graphics should not be too “busy” for the reader, meaning that there should not be too many words or shapes squeezed into a small area. Also, using colors wisely within the graphics will enable those with colorblindness or a color vision deficiency to understand the graphics.

Documentation & Accountability

Clear communication in all phases of the participation process is crucial to its success, particularly during events. All of the information in the world is useless if it not understood by the audience. We recognize that it is not only important to be clear with knowledge sharing, but also to ensure that the ideas and reactions of the participants are recorded and repeated accurately and clearly. With these considerations in mind, we suggest three practices.

First, to evaluate our process, we will ask that community participants fill out a quick paper survey at the end of each event. Participants can pick up a survey at the beginning of the event and leave it with staff at the end of the event. The results will remain anonymous to promote honesty. We will also ask that staff and volunteers fill out a survey as well, which will have a unique set of questions pertaining to their experiences. Second, when it is not intrusive and does not inhibit full attendance or participation, we recommend recording the event. This will serve as a valuable resource for the facilitators as they can go back to a video or audio recording to determine if what they “heard” during the meeting is actually what was said. A video recording would also provide an opportunity to find interactions or ideas that might have been missed in the activity of the event. Third, we recommend summarizing the ideas and events of the meeting/event (similar to minutes) and 1) distributing it to the attendees to verify content and 2)briefly presenting it at the subsequent event. This may require some additional time from staff, but has the potential to prevent a misunderstanding that could derail the project. It also serves as an opportunity for staff to process what happened during the meeting. Ongoing evaluation and transparency are important aspects that must be maintained throughout the entire planning and implementation process in order to ensure that the most effective use of communication between stakeholders and community officials is utilized.

THE PLAN

Introduction to the Work Program

We propose a three-phased work program that is designed to emphasize informing and empowering the community. The motivation behind the program is ensuring that the decisions that the residents of North Saint Paul make regarding the implementation of Living Streets principles will be reflective of the community’s needs and wants. We recognize the work that has been done prior to this proposal and seek to expand on the suggestions made therein by expanding the breadth of participants. Although this plan has been developed with Margaret Street in mind, the work plan could be adapted to other corridors within the City. We summarize the work plan here, and go into further detail following the summary.

The three phases of the plan are: Preparation, Contact & Collaboration, and Implementation & Follow Up. The Preparation phase consists largely of work done internally by city staff. The work done during this phase consists of laying interpersonal groundwork along the corridor, research, and material gathering and preparation. The material that is gathered and prepared during this phase serves as the foundation for the next. Contact & Collaboration is the phase during which the most vital communication occurs between stakeholders. Through a variety of interactions and information sharing techniques, the plan aims to create a community that is fluent in the language of Living Streets. This could mean clarifying technical jargon or accurately communicating the costs and benefits of Living Streets interventions. By developing an educated base, the residents become more integral to and invested in the process. Finally, the Implementation & Follow Up phase ensures continuity of involvement once the plan moves from the public input period to the final design and construction.

The process is intended to last approximately 15 months, 9 of which are the participation-heavy Contact & Collaboration phase. This 15-month period includes initial contact with local leaders and ends with the close of the public input period for design. In an attempt to time the events with the seasonality of Minnesota, we recommend a schedule that sandwiches indoor winter exercises and meetings between outdoor activities in the early fall and spring. Further detail is provided below in the detailed description of phasing.

THE PLAN

Personnel Recommendations

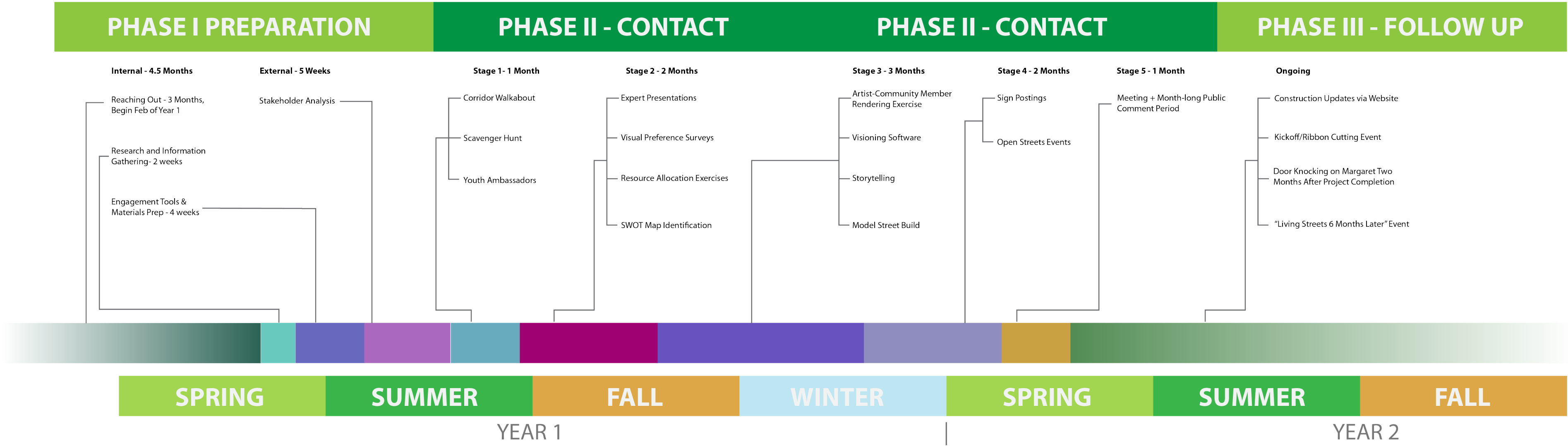
If possible, we recommend that at least two planners be dedicated to this project, one of whom should be a senior member of the staff. The proposed work plan assumes that two staff members will be available; the timeline should be adjusted if that is not possible. We suggest two staff members for a number of reasons. First, the amount of work required during the Preparation phase is substantial and will benefit by having more than one person move it forward. The experience of the senior member would be helpful in outreach, as discussed below. Second, during the Contact & Collaboration phase, set up and facilitation of meetings is much easier with two people. It is conceivable to recruit assistance for the physical act of transport and set up at various facilities, but it would be valuable to have a person familiar with the project and process to assist with facilitation (welcoming participants, writing notes, operating equipment, etc. Finally, if there is an unexpected change in personnel, two people on the project allows a high degree of continuity as the process moves forward.



<http://www.omnitrans.org>

The Phases in Detail

This section details the practical issues involved in implementing the work plan and the recommended timing of each. See Work Plan Schedule below for a summary.



Phase I: Preparation

Internal – Approximately 4 ½ Months

The internal preparation includes reaching out to vital members of the community, research and information gathering, and the creation of base material.

Reaching Out - 3 Months; Begin February of Year 1

Outreach to strategic partners should begin as soon as possible, as there is no “end” to creating connections. However, based on the number and types of people that should be contacted, we have allocated three months to coordinate involvement. The first people who should be contacted are those who could potentially be involved in the youth ambassador program. These include principals, teachers, parents, and leaders of student groups. By making contact in February, sufficient time is given for organization to occur during the school year.

We recommend that the following groups/people be contacted next:

- Business leaders / property owners on the corridor – In pursuit of our goals to build a base of community support and draw on community expertise, we want to make contact with business owners in the central section of the Margaret Street corridor. Not only do we want to build awareness, but their places of business could serve as potential meeting places in the future. Since we also intend to piggyback on other meetings, such as business associations or service groups, these contacts could prove invaluable.
- Leaders of nearby cities that have already incorporated Living Streets initiatives – We recommend reconnecting with those leaders who were willing to work with the people involved in the first attempt at implementing Living Streets to see if they would be willing to do so again. We also suggest expanding that reach.
- Residents who live in those areas – In addition to contacting those involved in other Living Streets projects from the administrative or design side, it would be very beneficial to identify residents have had similar projects happen near their property. “Converts” would be optimal, but any person with a resident’s perspective would be great to interview, and possibly invite to events.
- Experts on street design such as civil engineers and urban designers – Since we intend to include expert presentation within the program, we need to establish those contacts early and confirm their willingness and ability to present. Connections from prior work should be the first place to look.

Research and Information Gathering – 2 Weeks

The research portion of the Preparation phase is very task-oriented and can be completed in a relatively short period of time. These research subjects could be completed in any order:

- Census Data - Use census data to establish the demographic character of the corridor and identify any trends that may be relevant. Based on preliminary calculations, there may be some issues with the fineness of the grain at which some data will be available. That said, there is still valuable information to be found in the data.
- Case Studies – Research precedents of Living Streets (or Complete Streets, or Green Streets) projects that have had varying levels of success. Much of this exists in the previous work done for the City.]
- Costs/Benefits – Closely related to precedent studies is a review of the costs and benefits of Living Streets implementation. Again, this was done thoroughly in previous studies and could be expanded. A worthwhile exercise for Staff might be to figure out ways to whittle this information down into personal terms (how much/many per person).
- Property Owner List – Prepare a list of property owners within the corridor as a resource for those who make personal visits or need to send mailings.

Engagement Tools and Materials Prep – 4 Weeks

The engagement tools and base materials will be used throughout the participation process and should be reviewed closely and understood completely prior to use to avoid confusion and so that Staff can be well versed in their contents and use. These include:

- Project maps at a variety of scales, including site and context.
- “Budget” for Resource Allocation Exercise
- Anecdote “Stories” written by Staff
- Materials for events and meetings, including paper of many sizes, markers, pens, blocks and random “city-building” pieces for Model Street Build, Projector, etc.
- Presentation slideshows and handouts – We recommend preparing two packages of presentation materials at different levels of detail. One package would be prepared for short presentations of 5-10 minutes that would be used at “piggybacked” meetings and as an introduction to events that have a focus other than information sharing. The other would be more comprehensive and considerably more lengthy (20-40 minutes), and would serve as a standalone presentation or could be given as part of an information-based event.
- Though not a tool or material, this is the point at which event spaces should be reserved. When choosing locations for meetings, consider accessibility and space for children. In addition to working with local businesses and organizations, we recommend reserving space in City Hall as a backup for all meeting times. Churches and schools are prime examples of organizations with large facilities that could host public meetings and events located along Margaret Street. Having a public meeting located within the corridor itself allows stakeholders maximum opportunities for participation.

There are a few items for which the acquisition time is uncertain and there may be a longer lead time. These are:

- CommunityVIS software or similar – If the City does not possess equivalent software, it will have to go about acquiring it. There will also likely be a training period for those who intend to use it. The timing of acquiring the software will depend on resources and manufacturer’s recommendations for training.
- Visual Preference Survey Images – Should the City choose to use the package sold by (INSERT COMPANY HERE), they will have to go through a similar process described in the CommunityVIS notes. If they decide to develop their own catalog of images, they will have to build that library.
- Signage Renderings – The pre-project visualization signage will require renderings and the City will have to determine who do them. If the work could not be done internally, some possibilities include hiring a consultant or coordinating with a University student or course.

These materials should be revised as necessary as the engagement process progresses.

External – 5 Weeks

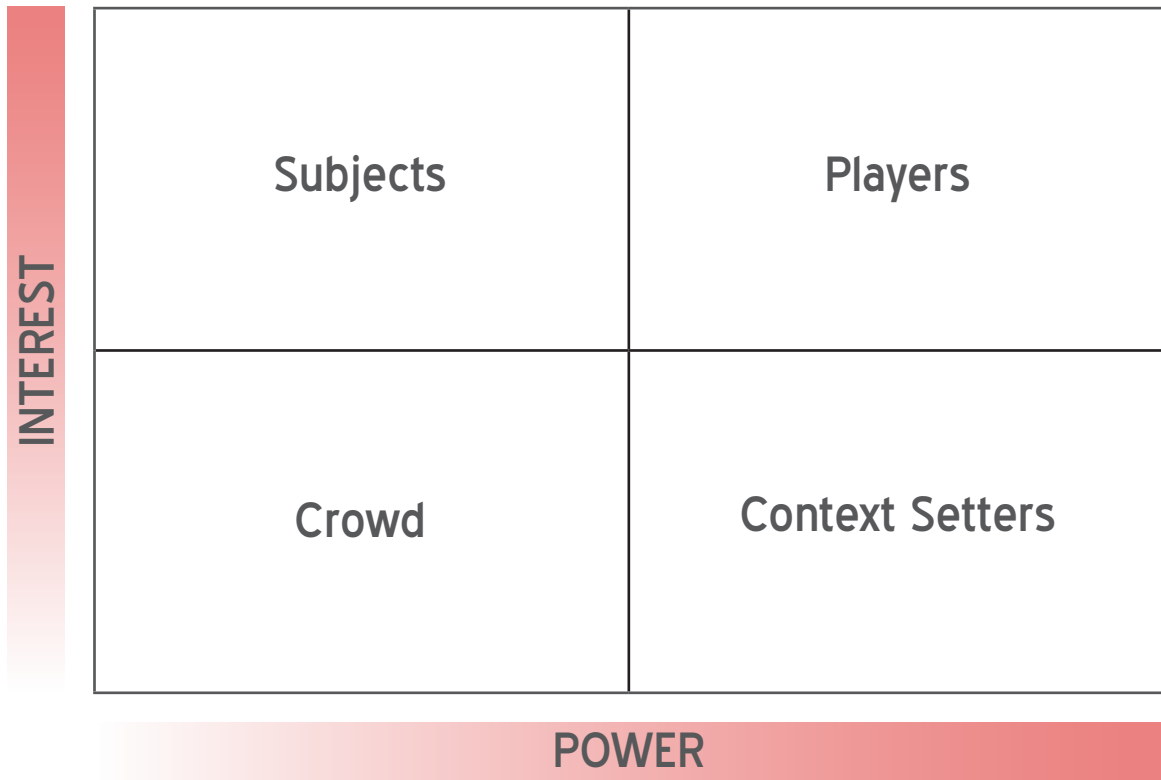
The external preparation effort involves the stakeholder identification process. By having stakeholder identification occur at this point in the process, City Staff has a good understanding of the project background and stakeholders can be identified prior to the initiation of Phase II.

Stakeholder Involvement

Community engagement is beneficial for the city of North St. Paul to gain support, address concerns, and determine the best version of the Livable Streets Program for each particular corridor. As stated above it is important for the city of North St. Paul of collaborate with residents, stakeholders, community organizations and other representatives throughout the corridor. When developing its Living Street program, the city of North St. Paul has already identified an extensive list of stakeholders interested in the program, many of which are located within the corridor. In addition to these stakeholders, business owners located both within and near the corridor should be included in the engagement process. In addition to residents and business owners, there are many public and private organizations including schools, churches, parks, and clubs that hold interest in this development. The list of businesses, organizations, and churches represented in Figure 3 within the Appendix is a starting point for which the city can use to identify stakeholders. It is recommended that the city include the community in formulating and expanding this stakeholder list. Because the community often has knowledge regarding involvement and activity that the city might not, utilizing the residents and institutes along the corridor for stakeholder identification is powerful tool. The city of North St. Paul might also utilize a power versus interest grid. This grid would identify stakeholders within the corridor, along with possible coalitions or relationships that may be formed or could be formed during this process. This tool assesses the interest and ability of each stakeholder to make change within the corridor and the planning process. Understanding these relationships is important for the city of North St. Paul in order to determine strategies for each set of stakeholders based on their particular interests and influence within the process.

Internal Stakeholder Analysis Tool

An internal stakeholder analysis tool is used to identify key players within the corridor, along with their potential influence and interest in making changes throughout the planning process. The vertical axis of this diagram distributes interest, whereas the horizontal axis distributes power of each stakeholder from low to high. For example, the Mayor of North St. Paul is a stakeholder with high interest and high power. She would be a key player in decision-making and she is very influential in the outcome of the project. A stakeholder with low interest and low power, for example residents outside of the Margaret Street Corridor, may have little interest and influence in the outcomes of the project. Overall this is a tool that is helpful in brainstorming potential stakeholders that should be engaged throughout the planning process. It also helps staff understand the power dynamics at play in their community.



Stakeholder Analysis Matrix

Phase II: Contact

Contact is the phase during which the bulk of engagement activity takes place. The events and meetings that we have chosen to include address the six goals set forth in this program. The Contact phase is divided into five stages, each of which describes sequential activities that build on prior efforts.

The Five Stages

Determining who to engage and how staff might bring them to a meeting is important, but it is only half the battle. At this point, it is important to engage the community in an efficient and effective manner. We suggest that the City host a variety of events that encourage collaboration and creativity. These suggestions are encouraged to be used in the sequence shown in the Work Plan Schedule. This sequence is divided into five specific stages that build upon one another.

This engagement process encourages the inclusion of community expertise and interest in the design of the Margaret Street corridor before utilizing the technical expertise of City Staff and consultants. This allows citizens to take ownership in the project, making it a true collaborative effort. Too often, a street reconstruction project is designed by technical professionals. Community members are only asked for their feedback after the design has been drafted. Instead, we encourage the community members to design Margaret Street and the technical professionals can tweak the design to meet State and local design standards afterward. We will ensure that there is a continued flow of information between the technical professionals and the community members to encourage collaboration, transparency, and community building. The five stages are:

Stage 1: Scavenger Hunt, Corridor Walkabout, Youth Ambassadors

The first stage focuses on building support and knowledge in the community about the Margaret Street Corridor.

Stage 2: Resource Allocation Exercise, Visual Preference Survey, Model Street Build, Expert Presentations, SWOT Exercise

Collaboration with the community is the main goal of the second stage in order to design Margaret Street based on community expertise and interest.

Stage 3: A Second Corridor Walkabout, Artist-Community Member Rendering Exercise, Visioning Software, Storytelling

In the third stage, community members will put their knowledge and expertise to work in visualizing their goals for Margaret Street.

Stage 4: Sign Postings, Open Streets Event

Promoting the findings from previous collaborations is the main goal of the fourth stage.

Stage 5: Public Meeting

In the fifth stage, the City will host a public meeting to present the final design for Margaret Street and inform the community on the next steps in implementation.

Phase II: Contact - Details

Stage 1: 1 month

Corridor Walkabout

Perhaps the best way for community members to gain perspective and generate ideas about the future of Margaret Street is through a walk along the length of the corridor. At 1.1 miles long, a walk of Margaret Street from Holloway Avenue to 19th Avenue might take just half an hour, including stops along the way. Asking attendees to meet at Holloway Avenue, a group might walk the length of the corridor, led by city staff, who might point out elements of street design related to Living Streets. This informal technique would encourage conversation among attendees, and would allow them to obtain tangible knowledge of the corridor. Instead of a regular informational meeting, a walkabout allows staff to communicate the technical information about Living Streets to citizens in a conversational setting, which encourages questions and interaction. The brief walk might terminate in Silver Lake Park where a city staff might facilitate a group conversation about observations from the walk. These observations and comments should be recorded.

Scavenger Hunt

Occasionally an event about Living Streets may not need to be focused on Living Streets. Getting people to experience the corridor, similar to the Walkabout technique, may be as simple as something like a scavenger hunt along Margaret Street. Again, this technique provides an informal setting in which initial community questions might be addressed. This event might be held on a weekend, and would be ideal for families with kids. Families could be given a list of things to find along the corridor. For example, a pedestrian crossing sign, a bus stop sign, or a bicycle stencil painted on the roadway. If it is feasible, kids could use their parent’s smart phones to take a picture of the items on the scavenger hunt list. Otherwise, kids could simply draw on a provided map where they found the item. Once finished, the families could report back to Silver Lake Park to turn in their scavenger hunt list. Winning kids might receive a prize related to Living Streets goals, like a gift card to Gateway Cycle in Oakdale.

Youth Ambassadors

When planning for the future, it is important to include those who will be present in the future. Including youth in the planning process is important. Kids and teenagers have fresh perspectives, and often are not embarrassed to speak their minds (especially younger kids). In addition to receiving information from youth, these individuals may be good resources to distribute information. Several successful outreach programs have used youth in their outreach efforts. These “youth ambassadors” can reach out to park goers or those in the downtown area (at appropriate times of the day, of course) and be effective in gaining the attention of adults, when other city staff might not be successful.

Stage 2: 2 Months

Expert Presentations

Instead of giving general descriptions about process of implementation or layout of a Living Street, city staff could invite experts to discuss these elements with meeting attendees. For example, city staff might ask a landscape architect or an urban forester to attend a meeting and talk about greenscaping or rain gardens along the corridor. This would educate the public on aspects of Living Streets that are important. Furthermore, those who attended the meeting could pass this knowledge onto other community members more effectively. Instead of leaving a meeting with only the ability to identify certain bicycle infrastructure, if an expert is present, an attendee might leave with knowledge of the importance of bicycle infrastructure. It is the hope that this technique might excite the public and allow them to be “local experts” or “Living Streets ambassadors”. In a 2011 survey conducted by local resident Rosann McCann, a large portion of the residents along this corridor were concerned with the visual impairments due to proposed rain gardens. In order to address these concerns, expert presentations would be a way to to show many options that are available, along with how rain gardens can be beautiful and beneficial to this area. (Source: http://www.twincities.com/north/ci_19022099)

Visual Preference Surveys

This technique involves showing meeting attendees a series of pictures that display various levels of Living Streets deployment. It is important for the images to be designed in such a way that the viewers are reacting to what they are supposed to react to. For example, showing an image with a series of storefronts on Main Street with cars parked outside on a cloudy and rainy day will elicit a poor reaction no matter what it is compared to. City staff should develop a series of images that keep all factors extraneous to Living Streets consistent across all images in order to achieve the appropriate reaction. This technique will not only reveal the audience’s preferences to city staff, but it will also help the audience realize what they enjoy. Perhaps an attendee has no preference before the meeting. A visual preference survey will help an attendee sort through their opinions.

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Resource Allocation Exercises

Many community members differ on their preferences for spending. A technique that has been effective in determining spending preferences is a resource allocation exercise. In this technique, community members are given a fixed “budget” which they cannot exceed. This budget can be a fictional dollar amount or even a budget of “widgets”. This allows participants to be separated from a money value. However, it is important that the budget be proportional to the actual Living Streets budget. Each “element” of Living Streets deployment can be listed, each with a cost. Similarly, the costs of each Living Street element should be proportional to the actual cost, costs of the other elements, and also the total budget. For example, if the budget for the entire project is 100 widgets, street furniture along the corridor might have a cost of 20 widgets, rain gardens might have the cost of 30 widgets, and a cycle track along the entire corridor might have the cost of 50 widgets. These exercises are also a good opportunity to show the savings over time that can come from Living Streets implementation. For example, when creating narrower streets, future maintenance costs will decrease. Because projects costs are often contentious, this exercise might be a good time to address these concerns. There should be enough Living Streets elements such that participants have to make choices between them to not exceed the budget. This will provide city staff with what elements the community prefers, and those that members do not feel are as important. If resources are available, this type of exercise can be done on software like those made by MetroQuest. MetroQuest is an online community engagement platform that provides information sharing and interaction with the user.

SWOT Map Identification

A SWOT analysis is a technique used in engagement processes to identify a community’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. In a meeting setting, we will ask small groups to identify these items on a map of North St. Paul. Perhaps cyclists appreciate the bicycle lane north of Seppala Boulevard on Margaret or maybe residents dislike how the sidewalk ends on the east side of the street south of South Avenue. Some residents might wish there were more bicycle route connections to Silver Lake Park. Perhaps parents feel scared about their children crossing on Margaret Street in front of the Cowern school.. A small group centered around a map armed with pens or pencils of different colors can make note of all these points along the corridor or even throughout the city. These points are a great way to identify where Living Streets infrastructure might serve the greatest benefit.

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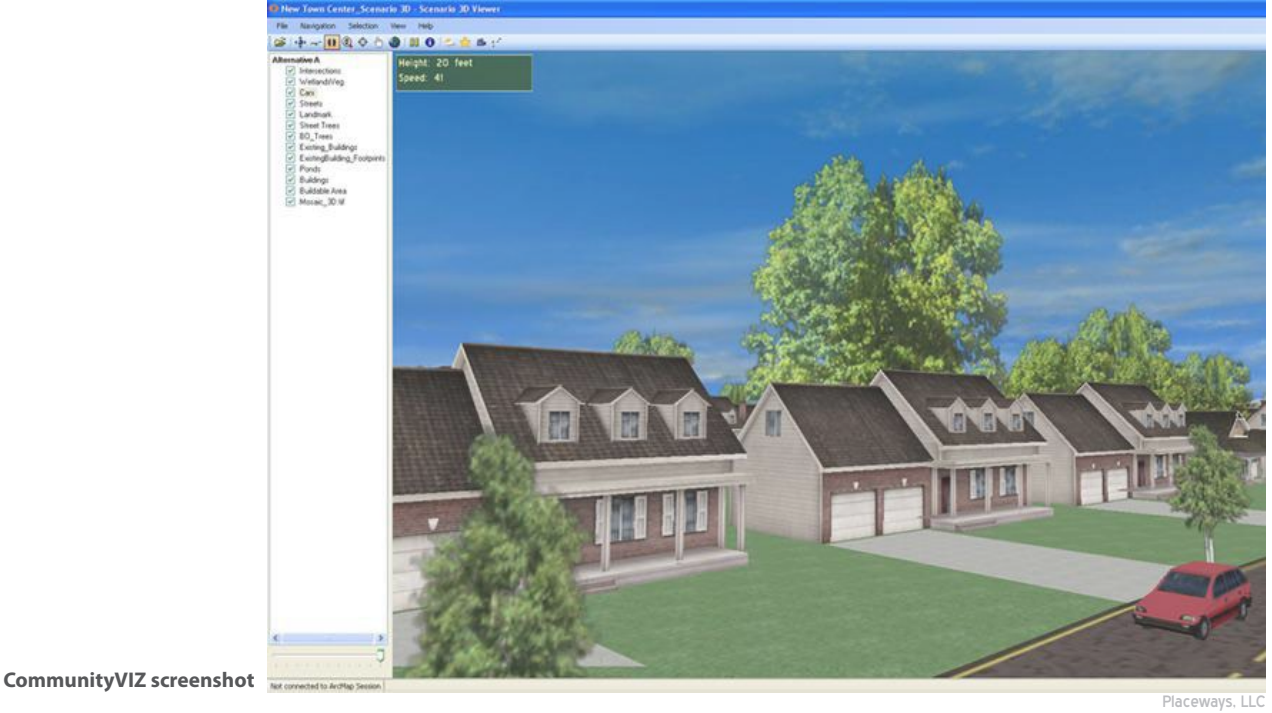
Stage 3: 3 Months

Artist-Community Member Rendering Exercise

Another technique for creating a physical vision for a corridor that is fun and informal is using an exercise similar to a police sketch. An artist may sit with community members as they describe an ideal streetscape. The artist ask questions of the attendees in order to better understand their ideal vision for the community. When the artist is complete with a sketch, it is revealed to the attendees, and a discussion of additions and subtractions to the scene might be had. This sketch is then a hard copy of community members vision city staff can reference as the plan progresses.

Visioning Software

Often, it is helpful for community members to have a vision of what their neighborhood might look like after changes. CommunityVIZ is software that operates with ESRI ArcGIS. This software allows city staff to design realistic 3D flyovers of what Margaret Street might look like with elements of Living Streets deployed. Instead of city staff presenting street design suggestions to the community, we suggest that staff use this software in collaboration with the community. In this way, community members would feel as though they had a role in designing their street. There are a variety of other software options that may yield similar designs. These techniques would empower community members and yield popular results.



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Storytelling

The ability to paint a picture and allow meeting attendees to imagine a street with Living Streets elements can be achieved through storytelling. City staff may develop several (usually three or four) alternate Margaret Street corridors and describe these visions to the audience through a story. After city staff has described these alternatives, there could be audience vote, rank and/or discuss the scenarios. For example, here are two different anecdotes:

Anecdote 1:

Sam Garrett has just gotten home from his office in Woodbury. To make dinner, he is planning on meeting some friends at Silver Lake Park for a barbeque. Instead of driving the short distance from his house on Charles and 2nd, he decides that he'll walk the mile. Along the way he stops and chats with the Evans' family that is outside working in their garden. Sam asks about the new garden Linda is working on, and she explains that it is to retain storm water. "That's funny", Sam thinks, "storm water just goes into the sewer, I wonder why it would need to be caught." Sam gives the Evans' dog Kirby a scratch on the ear and continues on his way. On the corner of Margaret and 7th, Sam notices a teenager loading her bike onto the front of a bus, then hop on and pay her fare. Several kids run past him as he crosses the street, giggling, with their father stopped behind them chatting with some one sitting on a bench. As he approaches the park, he enjoys the smell of all the trees that have recently been planted along the boulevards just as a large group of bicyclists zoom by him and take a left onto 19th Avenue. He's happy to have arrived at the Park, where is friend has just taken his cheeseburger off the grill.

Anecdote 2:

Jess Gilbert got off the phone with her friend Cassie who has invited her to the beach at Joy Park. It's already 75 degrees and it's only 9:00 am. She's made a fresh fruit salad for she and her friends to snack on at the beach, and she loads it and her stereo into her trunk. Backing out of her driveway on near Richardson Elementary, she rolls down the window, realizing how lucky she is to have a beach only a five-minute drive away—even though her treeless front yard allows her to lay out in the sun without having to drive to the beach. "Hooray!" she thinks, "this summer is going to be great!"

The idea behind constructing these anecdotes is not to have the attendees react to specific elements of the story. Rather, it is important to have them react to a feeling, then discuss what element within the story might make them feel a certain way. These stories also paint a picture that isn't focused on what a street will look like with Living Streets elements, but the lifestyle and community that might be present with Living Streets elements in place.

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Model Street Build

Similar to techniques used by planner James Rojas, members of the community who attend meetings could participate in building a model street in North St. Paul. First, a larger group may be split into a series of smaller groups, each with their own table. A series of trinkets and knick-knacks could be laid out on a table—anything from hair curlers to pipe cleaners to buttons to Popsicle sticks. With these, participants could be asked to design answer a broad question through arrangement of these objects, or a more focused one. A few examples are provided:

- How would you like North St Paul to look in twenty years?
- How would you like the transportation network in North St Paul to look in ten years?
- How would you like downtown to look in ten years?

Because the participants are armed only with these small toys, they are encouraged to use their imagination and be creative. Exercises similar to this have been shown to yield very powerful results. Groups work in teams, coming to a consensus over how to plan a neighborhood. Furthermore, this activity can be a great exercise for families with children.



<http://www.nationalbuildingmuseum.net>

Stage 4 : 2 Months

Sign Postings

Sign postings in downtown and along the Margaret Street corridor are an excellent way of educating the public about a Living Streets project that is being considered for their neighborhood. A sign with a simple graphic showing “What your street could look like in the future” could be posted in the following locations:

- Cowern Community Garden looking north towards Cowern Elementary School, illustrating added infrastructure outside the school
- On the southwest corner of Margaret Street and Seventh Avenue East showing a rain garden, improvements to the existing bus facilities, as well as pedestrian and bicycle amenities
- On the northwest corner of Margaret Street and Nineteenth Avenue, looking south, showing the connections of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to the park

The images contained in these graphics will be those created during artist-community member renderings, visioning exercises, or other workshops that might yield images. In this way, meeting attendees will have had a stake in creating these options later presented to the larger community. It also gives staff the opportunity to prove that the community has been heard. These signs should be positioned in such a way that the included image will give the same spatial perspective to the viewer—when they look past the posted sign, they should be seeing the same space that is included in the image. In this way, it will be easy for the viewer to imagine a future Living Street. It is also important to include contact information (website, email, project office phone number) on these postings, so that community members may give feedback on the project.

Open Streets Events

First used in Bogota, Columbia, Open Streets events involve day-long street closures to automobiles to encourage community members to enjoy street space on bike and on foot, mingle with fellow community members and be healthy, all without car traffic present. Open Streets have been popular in Minneapolis for the past three summers, and St. Paul held it’s first Open Streets event in 2013. Although these events are not formally tied to Living Streets, many priorities are shared by both programs. City staff would be encouraged to be present at Open Streets events to promote Living Streets.

Stage 5: Meeting + Month-long public comment period

Public Meeting

As described within the five step design process for planning a street reconstruction project, step five consists of a public meeting. This public meeting will be used to describe to community members what has been learned from stages one through four in order to develop the final design for the Living Streets Plan for this corridor. From this public meeting citizens are welcome to continue to engage in a public comment period where planners will address any questions that may arise during this time. Following the public comment period, an informational presentation will be given providing next steps on the implementation phases of the Living Streets Plan.

Saint Paul uses an online pubic comment portal similar to what could be used for the feedback period.



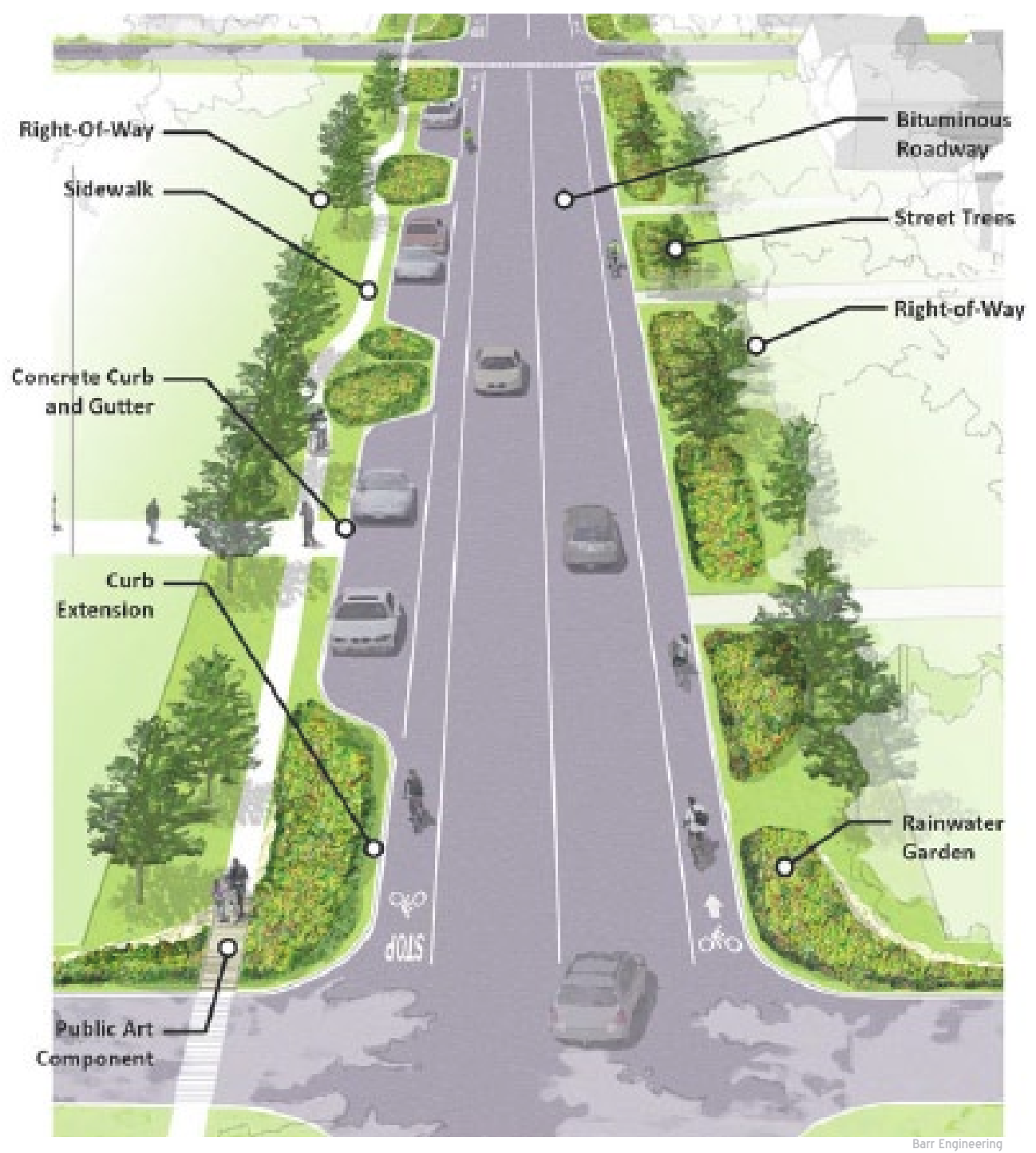
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Phase III: Implementation & Follow Up

Upon completion of phase two, final recommendations for design of the corridor has been developed and endorsed by the community members. Following the creation of the final design and implementation it is important for the City of North Saint Paul to continue to conduct community engagement as a long-term, ongoing process to ensure any concerns are being addressed and to maintain relationships formed during initial participation efforts. A few examples of events that could be held in order to continue the engagement process after implementation of the plan include:

- Construction Updates via Website
- Living Streets Ribbon Cutting Ceremony / Kickoff Event
- Door Knocking along Margaret Street two months after kick-off
- “Living Streets: 6 months Later” event to celebrate the project and facilitate ongoing conversation

Each of these events is an opportunity to provide additional information about ongoing engagement opportunities and how to address concerns that may arise after implementation. It also gives city officials a chance to thank and acknowledge the work residents put in through the collaboration in order to make the project a success.



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STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

Strengths of the Process

Overall we feel this process provides a structured and collaborative process in order to further engage community members along the Margaret Street corridor. Collaborating with citizens early on within the planning processes allows community members to gain the trust of the city officials. Additionally it provides an opportunity for city officials to address any concerns that may be raised prior to the completion of the both the design and implementation phases of the project. Therefore, early and meaningful engagement results in greater buy-in and chance of success.

Weaknesses of the Process

While we believe this process is beneficial for increased collaboration, it does require increased time and resources. Completing each of the public participation events, handouts, comment responses and any additional feedback may be time consuming for staff. This process also requires intensive resources in order to complete each of the engagement practices used to collaborate with the community. All of the necessary resources may not be available, which would in turn be more costly. In general each of these public participation efforts will be more expensive up front for engagement efforts. However, though this process may require increased time, money and resources we feel community pushback and hesitation will be minimized due to the increased collaboration throughout the planning process.

CONCLUSION

Our proposed engagement process for the redesign and reconstruction of the Margaret Street corridor is collaborative, imaginative, and inclusive. It addresses our commitment to diversity, creativity, collaboration, and communication in this engagement process. It calls for a great deal of collaboration between the community members and city staff at the beginning of the design phase. It is different than the usual engagement process because it aims to utilize the creativity and interest of community members at an early stage. By focusing on building relationships within the community, this process has the power to foster ongoing participation in the implementation of the Living Streets Plan throughout North St. Paul. We aim to empower traditionally marginalized members of the community and foster their ownership in this project and similar projects in the future. With collaboration, imagination, and inclusivity, our engagement process has the ability to implement the Living Streets Plan in a very meaningful way.



Figure 1 - Public Participation and Living Streets Design and Implementation Process

Public Participation and Living Streets Design and Implementation Process			
Time Frame	Project Step	Communications Element ¹	Communications Objectives
March	Preliminary design and feasibility study begins		
April	City and RWMWD design living street elements and explore funding options		
July	Informational letter & brochure mailed to affected residents & businesses announcing the project on their street	Informational Letter	Notice open house, reconstruction process, how streets are selected, assessments/financing, construction impacts
		Living Streets Brochure	What living streets are; living street benefits
		Project Website launched	Project updates; hosts all communications generated for project
Mid-September-October	Neighborhood open house	Presentation Boards	What living streets are; living street benefits
November	Preliminary design study completed		
	Public meeting held to share results of feasibility study and the preliminary street design	Feasibility results letter	Estimated cost, net cost savings, living street components
January-March	Final design, construction document preparation, permitting, bidding, contracting	Construction letter	Construction time frame; issues during construction
April-May	Construction starts		
October-November	Construction finishes		
Spring	Warranty work completed; maintenance plan initiated		
Summer/Fall	Final assessment hearing	Final assessment results letter	Final proposed assessments; financing options; rainwater garden maintenance tutorial given

Figure 2 - Communications and Outreach Efforts

Communications and Outreach Efforts	
Target Audience	Key Benefits and Messages
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children can walk and bike safely• Healthy children from greater exercise• More time for self because children are more independent and can get themselves to school and other places through safe walking and bike routes• More opportunities for kids to meet other kids and make friends• Parents won't have to watch their children every second because of increased safety• Parents worry less• Sidewalks are social spaces• Sidewalks/bike paths make it easier to meet other families
Children (age 6 – 20) and teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feelings of greater independence• Excitement of outdoor activities with friends• Walk and bike safely to school, home and to parks or downtown• City streets can provide creative expression for a community by featuring public art and unique character that develop neighborhood pride• Streets can be more environmentally friendly and help protect our water• Trees and rain garden plants are important tools in helping keep our water clean• We all live downstream—as a community we can work together to help protect and improve our water, and the animals and plants that live in our environment• We can work together to create safe and healthy streets• Schools can be role models for helping “stop water where it drops.”
Seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater mobility and health due to safe places to walk and bike (it's easier not to drive)• Freedom to be mobile in different ways• More opportunities to be present in neighborhood and meet neighbors• Plenty of people want to buy your house because your community has invested in what people value• Getting around takes less time and is easier
Bicyclists	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater comfort and safety• Easier access to regional trail systems
Business owners (Downtown especially)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased sales due to greater access by surrounding population
Gardeners/Master Naturalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can make a difference in my neighborhood• Enhanced community beauty• Opportunity to communicate environmental benefits of vegetation and water infiltration• Front yard gardens are social spaces
General community at-large	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make North St. Paul the first choice for young families looking for homes• We save money later if we do this today• Houses sell more easily in North St. Paul because of Living Streets• Enhanced community beauty• Attractive identity for the city• Overall enhanced property values – realized at time of sale

Figure 3 - Potential Stakeholders

List of Local Organizations (found mostly on City Website):

North St. Paul Green - North St. Paul Green is a volunteer group that beautifies the city by planting and maintaining flowers in the downtown gardens and by the Community Center.
Gateway Trail-Brown's Creek Trail Association
North St. Paul Park Fund
North St. Paul Veteran's Park Foundation (Has been working for a number of years to create a beautiful public space to give tribute to veterans and their loved ones. North St. Paul Veteran's Park, located on the corner of Margaret Street & Hwy 36 is a joint effort of the American Legion Post 39, VFW Post 1350, North High Air Force JROTC and the City of North St. Paul.)
Neighborhood Watch
Rotary Club of North St. Paul, Maplewood, and Oakdale
North St. Paul Lion's Club (they do pancake breakfasts)
North St. Paul American Legion Post 39
VFW Post 1350
North High Air Force JROTC
Ramsey County Library - North St. Paul Branch
Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
North St. Paul Area Foodshelf
Store to Door
North St. Paul Historical Society and Museum

(From Living Streets Program)

Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District
Ramsey County Active Living
Ramsey County
State of Minnesota
MnDOT
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
MInnesota Asphalt Pavement Association
Asphalt Recycling and Reclamation Association
The Environmental Council of Concrete Organizations
Minnesota Materials Exchange
Law Enforcement Agencies

Fire Department
Downtown Business Association
Parent Teacher Association
North St. Paul Arts Council
Health Partners
Blue Cross Blue Shield
Principal and teachers at city schools
Active Living Ramsey County
Seniors at Southwood Nature Preserve
North St. Paul Master Naturalists
North St. Paul Greens
Safe Routes to School
Livable Communities Account Grant Program
Local Trail Connections Program
Regional Trail Grant Program
Parks and Trail Legacy Grant Program
Environmental Assistance Grant Program

Nearby Businesses from Google Maps:

Bighley Auto Body
Valley Lettering
Roddy's Bar and Grill
Sundberg
Bradley Plumbing
Neumann's Bar
Luther Auctions
La'garage and Gallery
K and J Catering
7th Avenue Antique Mall
Gary Insurancenter
Polar Lounge
Hairstyles Unlimited
Design Vertigo
Polar Pharmacy and Medical Supplies
US Postal Service Workers - North St. Paul Branch
North St. Paul Chiropractic Office
American Family Insurance - Lisa Boone Agency Inc.

Nunn Group
DSGW Architects
Web Wolf Design
Gnathological Services
Full Throttle Custom Cycles
Kostelnik & Kostelnik Insurance
World Taekwondo Academy
Holiday Station Store
Domino's Pizza
Redbox
Bill's Home Repair and Remodeling
Thomas Prew Construction (Belmont Ln E)
Aetrium
Partners in Excellence
Key Chiropractic, Ltd of North St. Paul
Waddell & Reed

Churches and Schools on or near Margaret:

St. Peter's Catholic Church
St. Peter's Catholic School
St. Mark's Preschool (Helen and 13th Ave)
North St. Paul Public Schools (Helen and 12th Ave)
Cower Elementary School
Community of Christ (1st St N and Skillman Ave E)
River of God Church (7th Ave E and Helen St N)
North High School (1st St and 11th Ave)

Nearby Parks:

Hause Park
Southwood Park (Nature Reserve here)
Silver Lake Park

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Living Streets Plan. *City of North Saint Paul, Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District, and Barr Engineering.*

Technical Communication, *Technical Communicators Association of New Zealand*, <http://www.tcanz.org.nz/Resources/Learn+About+Technical+Communication/Technical+Communication.html>, updated 2013



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